



“I feel Unlimited admiration for unselfish people.”

Jerry Wooten has had his share of hardship throughout his 84 years but the last two years, in his own words, have been “some of the toughest.” In March of 2020 a devastating house fire ravaged the Retired Air Force Veteran and his wife Tina’s home, effectively making them homeless.

Jerry and Tina, like many others in our community, live on a fixed income and could not afford the increasing homeowner insurance costs of their Brandon home, where they had lived for decades. So, when a fire spread from a neighbor’s back yard to their roof, resulting in an almost complete loss of their home, they had few options.

In the aftermath, as the family worked to clean up what remained, they encountered Hillsborough County Code Enforcement. But this was not a visit related to any code violations. HCCE had come to offer their help through a special program, Operation Code Vet. It is through this program that Jerry was referred to Habitat for Humanity of Hillsborough County’s Veteran Initiative. Our Veterans Initiative supports local veterans, like Jerry, through homeownership, home repair, and volunteer programs.

Jerry Wooten comes from a family of service men. He is one of four (4) brothers of which all served in the military. His brothers Frank and Glen served in the U. S. Army and his brother Royce joined the Air Force. Jerry followed him and spent 4 years, from 1956-1960 in the renowned Flying Tigers.



Jerry enjoyed his time with the Air Force and Flying Tigers and would have stayed. It was hard to make ends meet, though, and he had to leave in order to support his family. He instead became a Park Ranger and remained in that service until he retired in 2006. He and Tina have six children; 4 daughters and two sons . One loss suffered in the short time since the fire.

Jerry is grateful for the support he has received from the community and though the rebuild has taken longer than expected, he has faith that it will be finished soon.

“I have unlimited admiration for unselfish people,” Jerry said. “When companies encourage their employees to come out and help, it encourages them to be leaders in their communities. Everyone who volunteers are bigger and stronger than they think. Volunteerism builds people up and reveals the best in people.”